

Author/Agent Relationship

The agent/author relationship is a professional partnership in the publishing industry where a literary agent represents an author in various capacities. This relationship typically involves the following aspects:

Costs: First and foremost, agents do not charge to represent the authors they contract to represent. Agents work on commission only, usually earning around 15% of the author's earnings from book deals, including advances and royalties. This commission is earned only when they have acquired a book contract for one of their clients and all compensation is paid directly to the agent by the publishing house, not the author. This means the agent's income is directly tied to the author's success, aligning their interests. Any agent who tries to charge a fee to an author in exchange for representing them or promoting their book should not be pursued.

Representation: A literary agent acts as an author's advocate, representing their interests in the publishing industry. An agent's primary role is to pitch their client's book ideas and proposals to publishing houses which would have an interest in their book topic, secure book deals with publishers, negotiate contracts, and ensure the author gets the best possible terms.

Guidance and Career Management: Agents often provide strategic advice to authors, helping them make decisions about their writing career. This can include advice on which projects to pursue, how to build an author brand, and how to navigate the publishing landscape.

Manuscript Development: Although an agent will not assist in manuscript writing or development or the writing of a book proposal, a good agent will help the author make sure their sample chapters and book proposals are as solid as they can be to impress a publisher. This can involve giving feedback, suggesting revisions, and helping to refine the book's concept to make it more marketable.

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Negotiation and Contractual Matters: One of the most critical roles of an agent is to negotiate the terms of publishing contracts on behalf of the author. This includes securing advances, royalties, and rights, such as foreign rights, film rights, and audio rights. The agent's expertise ensures that the author is not taken advantage of and that their intellectual property is protected.

Networking and Market Knowledge: Successful agents have industry connections and understand market trends and the publishing world as a whole. They know which Acquisition Editors are looking for certain types of books and can pitch the author's work to the right people.

Long-term Partnership: Ideally, the agent/author relationship is a long-term partnership. A good agent will work with an author over the course of their career, helping them to grow as a writer and to maximize their earning potential.



In essence, the agent/author relationship is built on trust, mutual respect, and a shared goal of achieving success in the publishing world. The agent brings industry knowledge, negotiation skills, and connections, while the author provides the creative content. Together, they work to bring the author's books to market and to build a sustainable writing career.